

Introduction

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Interest in the condition, role, and sustainability of southwestern riparian ecosystems has increased greatly since the mid 1970's. Reflecting this growing interest is a series of symposia addressing southwestern riparian issues, including those coordinated by Johnson and Jones (1977), Johnson and McCormick (1979), Johnson et al. (1985), and Tellman et al (1993). The proceedings of these symposia tell an important story about the history of riparian ecosystems, documenting changes in water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife, land use, and human values. Concern for the declining health of riparian areas, first expressed by the scientific community, has expanded to a much broader spectrum of interest groups including land and water resource managers, educators, recreation managers, sports people, commodity producers, legislators, and environmentalists. All of these people seek information and understanding about the dynamics, functions, uses, and restoration of riparian areas, especially in relation to the quality of human lives and livelihoods.

Scientists and managers are now beginning to implement studies and projects that integrate different perspectives of riparian areas. People representing different disciplines, including the social sciences, are forming study teams to address complex questions. We are starting to acknowledge and manage for humans as an integral, influential component of riparian ecosystems by planning their needs, effects, and conflicts into our projects. In addition, new data, ideas, and technology from more traditional sciences such as biology and hydrology are being generated and modeled

with computer programs at incredible rates, propelling science beyond the boundaries of existing knowledge into a new age of information explosion.

This symposium on "Desired Future Conditions for Southwestern Riparian Ecosystems: Bringing Interests and Concerns Together" was intended to provide a forum to exchange ideas and information on riparian ecosystem management, with a new emphasis on human values, needs, and roles. Participation by government agencies, universities, land managers, environmental groups, American Indian people and private land owners was invited by the Steering Committee for the symposium. We actively sought speakers from a variety of disciplines to round out the more typical slate of presentations to achieve a broader understanding and review of riparian ecosystems.

The Honorable Walter Bradley, Lieutenant Governor of New Mexico, in his opening comments, challenged us to include an even broader spectrum of people in our knowledge sharing. He also recommended that we share information in a common language that all users and interest groups could understand. Based on the positive comments that we heard from audience participants, we are confident that useful and pertinent information was successfully shared and understood during the symposium and field trip, and that this publication will help spread this knowledge to a broader audience.

LITERATURE CITED

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